

Message Text

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13

ACTION AGR-20

INFO OCT-01 EA-11 ISO-00 EB-11 COME-00 L-03 TAR-02 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01 OMB-01 RSR-01 /061 W

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1611

C O N F I D E N T I A L

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE CANBERRA 4883

PASS AGRICULTURE FOR HARTMAN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, EGEN, ETRD, AS

SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA CONSIDERS MEAT EXPORT RESTRAINTS

1. AS A RESULT OF STRONG PRESSURE FROM WITHIN LABOR PARTY, PARTICULARLY URBAN GROUP LED BY SENATOR MURPHY, GOVERNMENT HAS DECIDED TO TAKE ACTION TO REDUCE DOMESTIC MEAT PRICES. FEDERAL CABINET HAS APPOINTED INTER-DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE, COMPRISING PRIME MINISTER'S, TREASURY, DOT, DPI, NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT, AND CUSTOMS AND EXCISE OFFICIALS, WHICH MET URGENTLY FRIDAY, AUGUST 31 TO CONSIDER PROPOSALS. ALTHOUGH FINAL DECISIONS HAVE NOT YET BEEN REACHED, IT IS CLEAR EXPORT TAX AND GENERAL EXPORT QUOTA SYSTEMS NOT ACCEPTABLE. COUNTRY PARTY LEADER ANTHONY PREDICTED ON FRIDAY EXPORT TAX ON BEEF AS HIGH AS 12 CENTS AUSTRALIAN PER POUND, BUT GOA OFFICIALS INDICATE THIS ACTION MOST UNLIKELY. EXPORT QUOTA SYSTEM STRONGLY SUPPORTED BY SENATOR MURPHY, BUT DPI, NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT AND MEAT BOARD STRONGLY OPPOSE BECAUSE DIFFICULTY ADMINISTERING QUOTAS FOR PLANTS IN NORTHERN AUSTRALIA, WHICH HAVE NO DOMESTIC MARKET.

2. ON PRESENT INDICATIONS A PROPOSAL TO GET SUPPORT FROM ALL CONCERNED WOULD BE ONE BASED ON SELECTIVE QUOTA SYSTEM FOR PARTICULAR MEAT TYPES. THIS WOULD AVOID THE DIFFICULTIES INHERENT IN AN OVERALL QUOTA, WHICH WOULD HAVE TO BE SOURCED AT THE PRODUCER

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LEVEL. A SELECTIVE QUOTA SYSTEM WOULD SIMPLY PREVENT EXPORT OF

CERTAIN TYPES OF MEAT IN DEMAND ON THE DOMESTIC MARKET, SUCH AS
FIRST GRADE EXPORT QUALITY. PRIME BEEF NOW GOING TO THE UK AND
JAPANESE MARKET WOULD PROBABLY BE MAINLY AFFECTED, BUT SOME EFFECTS
MAY BE FELT BY BONERS FOR THE US TRADE. PRIME TARGET IN SUCH A
SCHEME WOULD PROBABLY BE VEAL AND YEARLING BEEF. INDICATIONS ARE
CABINET WILL CONSIDER A SUBMISSION FROM THE COMMITTEE NEXT WEEK,
AND THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT SOME ACTION WILL BE TAKEN.
GREEN

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